Canada Issues New Definitives

Continuing what has become an annual tradition, on January 14 to meet its various postage rates Canada Post issued a total of ten new definitive stamps in a variety of formats.

As is customary, one of the new stamps features Queen Elizabeth II. The stamp design focuses on her role as Queen of Canada and incorporates a close-cropped photograph taken during the 2010 Royal Tour set against a subtle maple leaf background in outline form in gold against a black background. "We chose the subtle gold maple leaf pattern to bring Canada to the stamp without overwhelming Her Majesty's photograph," explains designer Doreen Colonello, adding that a great photo of the Queen is the key to designing a great stamp. "Above all, Her Majesty's photo reflects her kindness and honest engagement with people."

"Canadian Pride" is the title for a set of five stamps with a tourism theme—also a tradition for Canadian definitives. As explained by Canada Post, "It's no small secret that travelling Canadians sew the iconic maple leaf on backpacks and luggage. But our desire to show our pride begins at home where Canadians from across the country display our colors in ways limited only by imagination. In this year's set of five Permanent™ domestic-rate definitives, our flag proudly adorns the everyday activities of Canadians."

"I wanted to try to represent as many different regions of Canada as possible as well as different seasons. We've got images from the prairies, inland, and the coast, as well as summer, fall and winter," explains designer Karen Smith.

Smith's designs not only span the country geographically, but also show a broad cross-section of Canadian activities. The set of five stamps features essentially Canadian scenes with the Canadian flag uniquely displayed in each stamp. In one, three Muskoka chairs lounge on a dock facing a lake in early fall, evoking Canadian cottages from coast to coast. The fall colors are recalled by the golden hue of a very Canadian hay bale that waits in a prairie field at harvest time. On the East Coast, just outside Halifax, a spinnaker fills with a summer breeze representing the Canadian sails and flags that fill Canadian waterways each season.

During Canada Day celebrations in Winnipeg more than 3,000 patriotic Canadians gather on the lawn of the provincial legislature to form a living flag, challenging a record held by Victoria, British Columbia. Finally, a lone fishing hut brings a splash of color on a clear day to a frozen Lake Scugog, Ontario.

Riding the wave of popularity that greeted a previous Baby Animals issue, once again Canada Post offers four new definitives depicting young animals indigenous to Canada. Created by designers Monique Dufour and Sophie Lafortune, these stamps are in the same visual style as the past two editions of this series, with the image of the animal set against a mainly white background, with a hint of their natural habitat revealed.

The four animals, all native to Canada's forests and fields, are:

Baby woodchucks are seen on the "Permanent" Domestic rate (63¢ Canadian) stamp. Also known as groundhogs or whistle-pigs, they are born hairless, blind and helpless. Prey to foxes, hawks, coyotes, and dogs, they begin life outside the burrow with short trips to eat grass and clover. Generally an annual litter of two to nine pups is born toward the end of March or early April. By midsummer, they will leave their natal den, and move into their own starter burrows, which are usually no more than a few yards away.

Porcupines, on the $1.10 to U.S. rate, are also called hedgehogs, quill pigs or quillers—and as babies, as porcupettes. A newborn can weigh more than a baby grizzly bear at birth. Their soft quills harden soon after birth. As short-sighted rodents, they rely on their sense of smell. When frightened or in peril, their muscles tighten forcing their quills to come out. Aboriginals have used the quills of the porcupines for hair brushes and decorations. Unfortunately one of the greatest dangers faced by this creature is its own lack of balance; porcupines often fall out of trees and can be impaled on their own quills.

Deer fawns, on the $1.34 oversized mail rate stamp, are born with an average of 300 white spots on their fur, which usually disappear in time. Immediately after birth, its mother licks the fawn free of scent to hide it from predators. Except for the time spent nursing, baby fawns stay hidden in the grass until they can walk with their mother. A healthy fawn can outrun a human at a few days old but it takes three to six weeks before they can elude most predators.

The black bear, on the $1.85 international rate stamp, is born blind and hairless in late January or early February while the mother bear is still in her den. When frightened or in trouble, the cry of a young cub is similar to that of a human baby. Mother bear spends the following year and a half weaning, feeding, and teaching her cubs what to eat and how to survive so they can go out and live on their own.